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# SCR

## Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR

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To the readers of  
the "Anglo-Soviet Journal"

DEAR FRIENDS,

It gives me great pleasure to greet you on the occasion of the publication of the special issue of your journal to mark the 50th anniversary of the Soviet state.

The Society for Cultural relations with the USSR and its publication, the *Anglo-Soviet Journal*, are doing excellent work, enabling Soviet and British people to get wider and better acquainted with the achievements of our countries, particularly in the arts and sciences. The more the broad masses of the people know about our Soviet activities, about the aspirations of our people, and about our Soviet culture, which affirm the noble ideals of peace, humanism, and friendship between the peoples and states, the stronger, I am convinced, will be the understanding between the Soviet Union and Britain. And this is important, in the interests of both our peoples and also in ensuring lasting peace in the world.

I wish members of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR and readers of the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* further success in their noble work.

February 12, 1967.

(Signed) A. KOSYGIN,  
Chairman, USSR Council of Ministers.

# THE ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL

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**Journal of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR**

(Free to members)

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From **PROFESSOR P. M. S. BLACKETT**  
President, The Royal Society

The Royal Society has always valued highly its contacts with scientific colleagues all over the world, and we are proud of our good relations with the Soviet scientific community as a whole and with the USSR Academy of Sciences.

I am glad of the opportunity afforded by the Editor of the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* to send a message on the occasion of the issue of the Fiftieth Year Anniversary Number, and by this means express congratulations to all its readers in the Soviet Union who are celebrating the Fiftieth Year of the USSR.

The achievements of Soviet science are known throughout the world, and we are always delighted to meet our Soviet colleagues among whom are Fellows and Foreign Members of the Royal Society. Our Society and the USSR Academy of Sciences have exchanged visits by delegations of Fellows and Academicians on several occasions, and we have a highly successful agreement for the exchange of scientific visits. I am sure that in this way co-operation between our two countries will continue to increase and the friendship between our peoples will become yet closer; this is certainly our sincere hope and aim.

From **DAME LAURA KNIGHT, R.A.**

On the fiftieth birthday of the Soviet Union when the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* is preparing a Celebration issue, please may I offer greetings and congratulations?

How valuable is the work it has done towards bringing understanding and friendship between our countries!

The purpose of all true artists is, I believe, to give to their public the best they have in them to give. This, in itself, can sometimes be their only reward.

During many seasons long past, I had the good fortune of close contact with the Russian Theatre, the Diaghilev Ballet—that is whenever its supremacy of aesthetic achievement graced the British stage.

I was then granted the privilege of painting and drawing either backstage, in the dressing rooms or in the audience, by that great artist Diaghilev himself.

Urged as I then was by the perfection of all the arts employed in his presentation of the ballet, I never experienced more fruitful study.

Maestro Checetti, who schooled the members of this ballet, became my friend. I attended his classes with regularity. He would examine my sketch-book, and if I made a fault in any position, he beckoned to some youngster and said: 'Look, this is what you do.'

Maestro Checetti took me to Madame Pavlova's dressing room and asked her to allow me to work in her theatre.

I had the honour of becoming her friend, and finally between seasons for five or six weeks, I spent every day with her in her Hampstead home. Both

there at table or on the stage her appearance bore that of a spirit rather than that of a human being. ‘She needs only to hold out her hand on the stage,’ said Checetti.

Many were the dear friends I made in those days. To my great delight quite recently close contact has been resumed with Madame Karsavina and Stanislas Idjkowski, including other members of the Diaghilev Troupe, among whom are two English ballerinas, Madame Sokolova and Laura Wilson, who went by the name of ‘Olkhima’ in the programme.

The last time I saw that truly great artist Diaghilev (this was not long before he died), he rose from his seat, took my hand and said: ‘Wherever I am, no matter what country or what theatre, you will be welcome.’

### From J. B. PRIESTLEY

I can’t send a message of goodwill to any political-economic system now existing in the world because I have come to the conclusion that our whole civilisation, East or West, has taken a series of wrong turnings and that we badly need to re-think our fundamental problems. But after several most enjoyable and heart-warming visits to the USSR I do send all its people the thanks and good wishes of my wife and myself. And apart from the essential friendliness of everybody, we have noticed over and over again the results of some splendid ideas, which we ought to borrow from you. We have still much to learn from you, and you have still much to learn from us here in Britain. Until together we can reconstruct our whole industrial and technological civilisation, let us learn from each other and stop snarling and jeering, as at last I believe we are telling ourselves to do. In place of a COLD WAR, what we need now is a warm, fruitful, creative PEACE. Modern Man is in urgent need of learning how to live and not how to commit world suicide.

### From DAME SYBIL THORNDIKE and SIR LEWIS CASSON

May I send my good wishes and congratulations to the *Anglo-Soviet Journal*. It is with great pleasure that we know of the good offices of this paper—and the continued success of the Soviet Government. We both, my husband and I, are overjoyed to read of all the activities in Russia and its forward-looking principles. All good luck for the future.

### From MILES MALLESON

I’m glad of this opportunity to congratulate the Russian people on this fiftieth anniversary of their epoch-making revolution. In the last 15 years it has been my good fortune to visit Russia four times—twice as a member of invited groups, once as a holiday tourist, and recently as a member of our

National Theatre Company. So I have had, at least, a glimpse of what is happening there: the vast amount of new buildings—factories, flats, hotels, theatres, shops, restaurants; I have admired, especially, their care of their children, seeking from the earliest years to bring out all various potentialities of the next generation; wondered at their scientific progress; listened to some of their superb musicians. And everywhere met with such a warm and helpful friendliness. . . . But think back over these fifty years. In 1917, in the first world war, they had lost millions of men, their country had been laid waste, their people were starving; there was the hostile war of Intervention and the consequent Civil War. Confronting what nearly everybody in the world (except themselves) thought overwhelming difficulties, they rebuilt and created a new society. Within some twenty years, in the second world war, more millions of them were killed, and their country again ravaged, up to the very gates of Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad. To visit them today is to make one feel that these two recoveries are among the most amazing achievements of all history.

### **From ARNOLD L. HASKELL**

I am delighted to have this opportunity of sending my warmest greetings to my many friends in the Soviet Union on this its Fiftieth anniversary. Our ties in the world of ballet are particularly close and friendly. Our schools stress the same values.

Not only in London, Moscow and Leningrad, but in festivals all over the world I have had an opportunity to work with and to exchange views with Soviet dancers, teachers and critics. In many cases these professional meetings have grown into friendships that I value.

I strongly believe that it is in this way that the common man in both countries can overcome prejudices and so work for peace.

### **From ALAN BUSH**

#### **A GREETING TO THE PEOPLES OF THE USSR IN THE YEAR 1967**

For fifty years now the world has been a different place from what it had ever been before. The October Revolution and the consequent establishment of the first socialist state in human history prove that man's age-long dream of a world of peace and brotherhood among men is a scientific possibility. It is true that the existence of the USSR could not prevent the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany or Spain. But the heroism of the glorious Red Army and of the whole Soviet people was the major factor in preventing nazism from lasting more than twelve years. I have no doubt that I owe the fact that I am still alive today to the sacrifices of the Soviet people, led by their unconquerable Communist Party. Since the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the

scientific achievements of the USSR have saved the world until now from being the victims of further atomic bombs.

From the first days of its foundation the USSR established within its borders the social and economic equality of women with men and the equality of all races by law and has made these equalities effective in practice. In education it was the first country in the world to make corporal punishment in schools illegal; the Soviet teacher, Makarenko was pioneer in the treatment of juvenile delinquency.

The Soviet Union has shown how to bring art to the masses of the people and to stimulate to the utmost extent their participation in artistic activity. In my own field, that of professional music, it has shown how to develop instrumental performers of world standard in far greater quantity than any other country. The Soviet composers Prokofiev and Shostakovich are, with the possible exception of Puccini, the most popular 20th century composers with music lovers throughout the world. The musicians of the Soviet Union created a new type of music, that of the popular song with serious content; of these 'Soviet Fatherland,' 'The Soviet Airmen's Song' and 'Steppe Cavalry,' to name only three, became beloved in many countries.

I reckon myself lucky to have been alive during the first fifty years of the Soviet Union's existence. My heart beats more strongly because I know the heroism of its people. The glories of their contributions towards the progress of humanity have been a true and unfailing source from which has been nourished an unquenchable belief in the power of men and women to create a peaceful, prosperous and happy life for themselves on this magnificent planet, Earth. I do, indeed, rejoice at this 50th Anniversary of an event which will remain for ever uniquely memorable in human annals.

## From BENJAMIN BRITTON

I should like to salute the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* on the occasion of the 50th Year celebrations of the USSR, and also to send my warmest good wishes to the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR for continued good work.

There is in this country much ignorance and misunderstanding of Soviet people and their way of life, that everything that helps to break this down should be encouraged by every means possible. I have myself been fortunate enough to make several fascinating journeys to Russia, including an extended tour with the English Opera Group performing my operas and one highly enjoyable holiday in Armenia. On these occasions I have always been treated with the utmost kindness. I am also privileged to count among my closest friends two or three great Russian musicians. For those people who have not been as fortunate as I am, the enterprising activities of this Society and the excellent little *Anglo-Soviet Journal* are clearly of the greatest importance, helping many English people to understand the character and the circumstances of that great people, and to learn about their beautiful country. For understanding promotes peace, and peace is the most important thing in the world today.

## **From LORD RITCHIE-CALDER, C.B.E., M.A.**

When the world woke up that morning in October 1957 and found Sputnik I in its unlikely orbit even the unbelievers were convinced the Soviet Union had scientific self-sufficiency. It came as a surprise only to those who had deliberately ignored the traditions of Russian science which were built into the revolutionary purposes of the Soviet Union and which were encouraged with reverence and with sacrifice. The idea that inquiry in depth was deliberately subordinated to technological ends died hard. Outstanding Soviet contributions to scholarly research have matched the achievements in applied science. I recall the irony of Academician Vinogradov's paper at a radioisotopes conference. Western papers were boasting the use of radio-tracers in tracking sewage out to sea or finding leaks in oil wells; his dealt with the use of isotopes in determining the nature of cosmic meteorites. And every year, one's admiration has grown for the contributions of Soviet scientists to the international understanding of science and, in such things as the Pugwash Movement, to the responsible control of science for the benefit of mankind.

## **From D. N. PRITT, Q.C.**

### **President of the Society for Cultural Relations**

To one who, already thirty years old in November 1917, clearly remembering the events of that year, and who has followed the story of the Soviet peoples attentively and affectionately ever since, the fiftieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution recalls a wealth of memories: joy, admiration, wonder, misunderstandings and understandings, disappointments, anxieties, and relief, and ever again admiration and wonder.

And one who, however active he was in the political field, also worked for so long in the Society for Cultural Relations, must think at this time particularly of the achievements of the Soviet peoples in the field of culture. These are remarkable enough, even if they are only a part of a great picture of Soviet growth in every sphere of human activity, including the technical developments which have transformed the former backward peasant country into a great and well-balanced industrial-agricultural state which will soon hold the leading position in the whole world, the great construction projects, and the military foresight and efficiency which, resting on the unlimited endurance and courage of the Soviet peoples, brought about sensational victories in the Second World War over the previously undefeated forces of Fascism.

In this article I confine myself to the cultural growth of people who in 1917 were materially almost the poorest in the world, and almost the least literate. From the very start, through the hard years of the First World War and the years of hostile intervention, with their dire hardships and famines and shortages, the Soviet leaders were at work laying the basis of

cultural development for all their many and varied peoples. They had to build from the bottom in order to fulfil two elementary requirements which had been fulfilled long before in pretty well all Western countries which now lag behind the USSR—namely, the elimination of illiteracy and the development of universal education. The first was a tremendous task which had perhaps never been systematically undertaken anywhere before; in India, for example, the then illiteracy rate of about 90 per cent, which was not very different from that of Tsarist Russia, was still about the same when the long years of British rule ended twenty years later (by which time illiteracy had disappeared in the USSR).

The second, too, was a formidable enterprise, particularly in a country of so many different races and languages; it has been carried through so well that the Soviet Union probably has now the best educational standards in the world, and every child in the country has as full an opportunity as his neighbour to receive all the education he can usefully absorb.

On the basis of these two elements, a magnificent and unprecedented cultural development has taken place. To examine this one must consider what the term ‘culture’ embraces; it must include, I think, the opportunity for everyone, and not just for a fortunate minority, to live in decent surroundings; full equality for women in every field; special care for children of both sexes and all races; and the same opportunities for ‘national minorities’ as for the majority race or races. (On this point, one must not ignore or underestimate either the complexity or the immense human value of this ‘levelling-up.’ Read in terms of the British Empire as it stood half a century ago, it would involve providing the same facilities and standards for literacy and education for all the many races of Africa, Asia, the West Indies and Australia who were under British rule as for the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish.)

Many people, of course, think of culture more narrowly—music, dancing, painting, sculpture, literature. If one confines one’s attention to this more specific meaning, the great achievement of the Soviet Union consists, to my mind, in having made cultural activity and development a reality and a normality for the whole population, irrespective of origin, descent, occupation, or income. For the Soviet citizen, culture is not a luxury, an exception, a hobby, or the interest of a small minority; it is as much an integral part of his life as all his other activities—work, study, sport, leisure, or politics. The ordinary Soviet citizen would be horrified by the assumption of too many members of ‘upper-income-groups’ in Western countries that culture is something which only a selected few—selected by income plus inclination—can understand, desire, or use, and that the idea that a dustman should visit the opera or ballet would be too absurd for serious consideration. The immense wealth that is added to life when a whole population shares in the beauty of culture scarcely needs to be emphasised.

To illustrate how fully and how early the Soviet state devoted itself to cultural development—how clearly culture was no decorative afterthought but something essential and integral, I recall from my memories two at first thought small incidents, one from the very early days and one from the hard days of the Second World War. The first came as early as 1920 or 1921, when one would have thought that the mere struggle to eat, to survive, and to

overcome the terrible material shortages born of history, of the First World War, and of the interventions would have occupied every moment of both the leaders and the citizens; but the city of Leningrad at that time devoted thought and labour and material to the erection of a statue of Shevchenko. The second came during the siege of Leningrad, when thousands were dying of starvation, and the Fascist invaders' lines were only about four miles from the Kirov works, straining to the utmost the powers of endurance of the people of the heroic city; then architects were employed to deliver a series of evening lectures in the trenches and dug-outs, to explain to the troops the preliminary plans for the rebuilding of their battered city after the coming victory, and to ask for comments on the plans.

**From THE HON. IVOR MONTAGUE, M.A., F.Z.S.  
Vice-President of the Society for Cultural Relations**

In the fifty years that have elapsed since 1917 and the rather less time that our Society for Cultural Relations has been in being, I have had the opportunity to watch the effect of the relations between two countries, and to participate a little in some of them myself.

What we may have been able to contribute to Soviet happiness and development I am not of course qualified to judge, but I hope it is not negligible. I am sure the strongest Soviet contributions to British progress and welfare have been in the fields of science, including medicine and technical fields such as engineering and sociology, and, of course, such domains as economics, history, education and law. In all these fields contact with Soviet thought and practice has been an invaluable fertilising influence, not so much in the sense of offering discoveries to copy or examples to imitate, as in proferring new arguments and attitudes against which to measure our own experience. Sport has, as ever, provided occasions for exchanging skills and making friends.

In art—music and literature have brought us wealth from USSR to enjoy, genius to admire; graphic art rather less. Ballet and theatre have taught us much, indeed, they have provided the initial vibrations to British developments in these fields which have now reached a level of accomplishment whence they can return creative impulses to the original beneficiaries. In this category perhaps the world, and ourselves, have learned most from cinema. It is certain that the analytic geniuses of that extraordinary flowering period of experimental art in USSR followed the first year of the revolution, discovered, and passed on, original understanding of the laws of effect in this art that altered the whole course of cinema and to which creative artists in this field still return again and again. In their search for realism they expanded the categories with which cinema was able to deal, and the whole fruitful and skilful school of British documentary derives from the first Soviet steps in this direction.

My first visit to the USSR took place in 1925. Two years later I was representing our Society at the Tenth October Anniversary. Long may the cultural exchange between the two countries, fostered by our Society, continue to strike sparks from each to fire the other.

From **LIPMANN KESSEL, M.C., M.B.E., F.R.C.S.**  
Chairman of the Society for Cultural Relations  
with the USSR

The emancipation of the peoples of Old Russia half-a-century ago caused not only everlasting improvement in the economic and social circumstances of their lives, but led to profound changes in science, art and literature in the USSR and caused an indelible impact on the peoples of the rest of the world. It is to the everlasting credit of those few far-sighted British men and women who immediately recognised its significance.

In 1924, only seven years after the October Revolution, the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR was established in Britain. Ever since it has grown in influence and developed its activity to provide a valuable medium for the exchange of experience in science, literature, music, language and the ideas of everyday life. This has enormously enriched all our lives.

For many years after its foundation the SCR had to content itself with limited and generalised cultural contact. During the Second World War, however, the mass of the British people began to realise for the first time what a wealth of thought and achievement had been hidden from them by our Establishment, and the demands upon our slender resources grew enormously. We were able to meet most of the requirements of this new flood of interest. One result of this expansion was that cultural exchange played a small but significant part in mitigating the effects of the subsequent cold war atmosphere.

These cold war years were difficult, but for the past decade a tide of new interest has been flowing, and now an entirely new and positive atmosphere exists. The period of generalised cultural exchange has developed into the more important period in which innumerable specialised activities occur. Soviet artists delight British audiences; British composers write for Soviet instrumentalists; British scientists exchange ideas with their Soviet colleagues in every branch of science, individually, in institutes and at international conferences; British and Soviet doctors lecture in each other's country; British surgeons operate in Soviet hospitals; theatrical companies, films, television scripts and productions are exchanged; architects, teachers, indeed people in every walk of life constantly meet and discuss. If all the barriers are not yet down, at least we can now be sure that a wide and firm basis exists for developing permanent intellectual contacts between our two peoples.

In all this endeavour the Society for Cultural Relations, of course, claims no monopoly. We are proud to have been pioneers, and to have continuously carried out our mandate, notwithstanding episodic periods of political difficulty. The field is now wide open for direct exchange through individuals, unofficial and official organisations. The tasks are too manifold and onerous to be carried out alone by a voluntary organisation like the SCR., but we are happy, not only to continue our own modest efforts, but to act sometimes as catalyst, sometimes as fertiliser to the efforts of others.

The SCR was one of the first to recognise the importance for the British people of the October Revolution. The resulting variety and excitement of many aspects of Soviet art, science and culture generally have been brought close to us by the myriad of personal contact which we have been able to effect. We greet the Soviet people on this notable birthday, and assure them of our continuing endeavours to bring our two peoples into ever closer harmony.

# Cultural and Scientific Ties between the Soviet Union and Great Britain

By Sergei K. Romanovsky, Chairman of the State Foreign Cultural Relations Committee

Cultural and scientific exchanges are playing an ever greater role in relations between countries. These ties not only mutually enrich national cultures, replenish the treasure-store of world culture and facilitate further scientific progress, they help in achieving mutual understanding and bringing nations closer together and, in the final analysis, facilitate the preservation and strengthening of peace.

From the first days of its existence the Soviet State actively came out for developing cultural and scientific ties with other countries. These ties have especially widely developed in recent years. In 1966 the Soviet Union had contacts with more than a hundred countries in the sphere of culture and science, including almost sixty countries with which inter-government agreements had been concluded.

Many thousands of Soviet scientists, art workers, educationalists, workers in public health and sportsmen, annually visit foreign countries while a large number of representatives of culture and science of other countries come to the Soviet Union. Exchanges are also conducted by Soviet public organisations: The Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, youth, women's, trade union and other organisations.

Cultural and scientific contacts between the Soviet Union and Great Britain have been actively maintained for many years. History knows of no small number of excellent examples of creative co-operation between Russian and British scientists, men of letters, musicians, artists and representatives of many other spheres of intellectual life.

Nevertheless, these ties were never before so diversified as today: the exchange of professors and students, the co-operation of scientists, acquaintance with works of art, literature, guest performances of actors, films, sports competitions, tourist trips, friendly contacts between cities, etc.

I would like to cite several concrete examples of exchanges in the spheres of science, technology, education and culture between our countries which are carried out as a result of official agreements concluded on behalf of the governments of the Soviet Union and Great Britain.

Wide-scale contacts have been established between the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society. They include joint research, experimental work in research establishments, the reading of lectures, visits of scientists from one country to the other to participate in national and international congresses, symposiums, conferences, etc., In 1966 nearly one thousand British scientists visited the USSR. Many of them participated in the world congresses of mathematicians, psychologists, crystallographers, oceanographers, physicists, etc., which were held in Moscow.

The exchange of delegations of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society in 1965 was of great importance for the further development of scientific co-operation between our countries. During the visit of the British delegation to Moscow in October 1965 the signing of a new agreement took place which, in particular, envisaged the holding of joint conferences and symposiums, as well as the establishment of direct contacts between scientific institutions of both countries.

In accordance with the new agreement, a series of experiments on the radiolocation of Venus was successfully undertaken by the scientists of both countries, and at present further joint experiments are being carried out. The co-operation between the Soviet Centre for Distant Space Communications and the British Jodrell Bank, one of the largest observations in the world, is fruitfully developing.

In recent years Soviet-British contacts have expanded in the sphere of education. Exchanges of professors take place annually between Soviet and British universities and other higher educational establishments for the reading of lectures, as well as exchanges of post-graduates for training and research work.

An important sphere of co-operation is in the mutual study of the languages of our peoples, which is carried on in a variety of ways and which offers many new opportunities. We are aware of the great interest shown by the people of Great Britain in studying the Russian language. When speaking of English in the Soviet Union, it should be pointed out that some four million schoolchildren in the Russian Federation alone study this language. Both Britain and the Soviet Union exchange teachers on a reciprocal basis. Thus, Soviet teachers in the past study year conducted Russian classes in Birmingham and Edinburgh Universities and are at present involved in the Russian language course in London and Newcastle Universities. At the same time British teachers are today working in Moscow University and in the Institute of Foreign Languages.

We are of the opinion that the direct ties between Soviet and British higher educational establishments are most encouraging.

Today both sides have much to contribute that is valuable and useful in this sphere and which is worth studying and employing. Useful contacts have been established between Kharkov and Manchester Universities. Last year delegations from these universities, headed by their rectors, were exchanged. Recently an agreement was reached on establishing ties between Leningrad University and London and Glasgow Universities. Soviet and British educational establishments exchange textbooks, teaching, methodological and children's literature and educational films.

Quite a number of interesting measures are being conducted in the sphere of art. The best representatives of the Soviet and British musical world have performed in both countries. The Ballet Company of the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre and the Gorky Drama Theatre of Leningrad, the Black Sea Fleet Song and Dance Ensemble, the Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio and Television and many soloists were warmly received by British audiences.

In turn, Soviet audiences very much appreciate the talent of British actors

and artists as, for instance, in the guest performances in the Soviet Union of the National Theatre directed by Laurence Olivier, that remarkable British actor, and in the concerts recently held in Moscow and Leningrad with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and John Ogdon, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears.

There is another sphere in which we have widening opportunities —this is the cinema. This year film weeks and premieres of Soviet films are being held in Britain and of British films in the USSR. Films made by British producers always interest Soviet audiences. Last year the premiere of the British film ‘The L-shaped Room’ with Leslie Caron starring in the main role was held in Moscow. A week of British scientific films was also held in Moscow in March 1966 with British film workers participating. We are pleased that the best works of the Soviet cinema are well received in Britain as for example, the Soviet film ‘Hamlet’ with Innokenty Smokhtunovsky.

Contacts between intellectuals—writers, composers, artists and architects—play an important part in Soviet-British cultural ties. For example we are aware of the great interest shown in Britain in works by Russian and Soviet authors. The following figures speak of the interest in our country in British literature. During the years of Soviet power 3,292 book titles of British fiction and modern literature were published in a total of 155½ million copies. The works of 289 authors were put out in 54 languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union. In 1966 plays written by British playwrights were shown in 263 theatres of our country and in 22 languages. The plays by William Shakespeare are staged in 137 theatres. In 1965 the Bolshoi produced Britten’s opera ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’.

Competitions and matches between British and Soviet sportsmen in boxing, football, track-and-field events, tennis, chess and many other sports have become a tradition.

Lately links between cities in both countries which started during the years of the war by the hero cities of Volgograd and Coventry have widely developed. They are at present maintained by 22 Soviet and British cities and districts and among the most active are the ties between Moscow and London, Leningrad and Manchester, Yalta and Margate, Odessa and Liverpool.

These cities exchange photo exhibitions, films, radio programmes, literature and information material. These ‘twinnings’ also facilitate a reciprocal study of experience accumulated in municipal administration.

This year the Soviet people are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Soviet State. During these years our country has carried out major socio-economic transformations.

When interpreting the past we profoundly realise the new tasks confronting us. We plan to do a lot and this includes the extension of cultural and scientific exchanges between the USSR and foreign countries as well.

Soviet people are confident that the further development of cultural ties between Great Britain and the Soviet Union will in every way facilitate the creation of an atmosphere of confidence and will be an important contribution to the cause of strengthening co-operation and mutual understanding between our countries.

# Cultural Relations 1917-1967

By Andrew Rothstein

The beginnings of Anglo-Soviet cultural relations must be sought in the fragments of information which began to reach this country, soon after the revolution of November 1917, about the efforts of the newly-created Soviet Government to bring education, science and appreciation of all the arts to the mass of the people, hitherto deprived of them. The information came in fragments, because to the barriers of a hostile censorship were added those of the war on the Soviet Republic which rapidly developed in the spring and summer of 1918. Only that tiny section of the British public which read



Moscow, January, 1959—Mr. A. Rothstein, SCR delegate with Marietta Shaginyan, Armenian writer

the Socialist press and one or two of the other papers, notably the *Manchester Guardian*, had access even to these fragments. Yet such as they were, they opened the eyes of at least some working in the cultural field, and not otherwise committed: they could find common ground, inspiring and even exciting, with the new régime in Russia—so strangely different from all existing States in its title of 'Workers' and Peasants' Government.'

The first such materials, from the summer of 1918, were those put out by the People's Russian Information Bureau, an organisation set up in Fleet Street by left-wing socialists. Particularly effective was the four-page printed

folder, *Maxim Gorki on the Bolsheviks* (January 1919) in which the great writer declared (as a former opponent) that future historians would 'have nothing but admiration and amazement at the grandeur of the present cultural work.' At that stage the determination to provide education for all children was its biggest feature: and Dr. John Rickman, member of a Friends' Relief Unit which had spent many months in Samara (now Kuibyshev) from 1916 to 1918, vividly described in articles for the *Manchester Guardian*, reprinted as a booklet by the PRIB, *An Eye-Witness from Russia*, in March 1919, the 'most generous' educational programme being carried out, the enthusiastic response it met from public and teachers, the opening of new schools, libraries and training colleges. Again, the Bureau published duplicated press bulletins once or twice a week. Among these were such items as a letter from the 80-year-old biologist, Academician Timiriazev—of English descent and a Fellow of the Royal Society—welcoming the formation of the first 'workers' faculty' (preparing adult workers for higher education) as the first step in the union of science and democracy (September 19, 1919): and the announcement of special measures to restore and maintain Tolstoy's house at Yasnaya Poliana (September 26, 1919).

By this time the first British visitor, specially equipped by past experience in Russia as a newspaper correspondent, had managed to break through the Allied blockade and return to Soviet Russia. This was Arthur Ransome, of the *Daily News*. His letter to the American *New Republic*—sent in May 1918 and reprinted in England as a pamphlet, *The Truth About Russia* (Workers' Socialist Federation, 1919), had already won him much notoriety; now he published a small book, *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, which became a best-seller wherever people were not wildly anti-Soviet. Among much else still of great interest for the historian, he drew a strictly factual picture of cultural effort, in spite of all the hunger and other hardships, which caused a sensation: an account of the prodigious theatrical life of Moscow, his chapter on the 'enormous' growth of the universities and of the great popularity among the workers of the classics of Russian literature, and his talk with Timiriazev.

These tiny windows on the arts in Soviet Russia were invaluable, being opened just when foreign invasion and the flood of quite extraordinary lying about the Soviets were at their height—but they were tiny. Others were opened a little more widely in 1920, when the Red Army was winning its decisive victories. That year saw the coming of the first British (or any other) Labour Delegation to Soviet Russia in May and June. In its very cautious Report, concerned moreover principally with other topics—in those days it required some courage even to state that 'we did not see people fall dead of starvation in the streets . . . we did not find that either women or children had been nationalised'—the delegation confirmed that not only was education expanding but 'in connection with the theatre, music, painting and sculpture, sports and physical development, means of pleasure and cultivation have been given to the workers on a scale unknown in earlier days,' and that it had 'been much struck by the enlightened policy of the Soviet Government in the matter of child life.'

Then, in the early autumn of 1920, there came the first cultural visitors proper, whose experiences might have opened relations in this sphere much earlier, had they been heeded, than it turned out. The first was Mrs. Clare Sheridan, sculptress, cousin of Winston Churchill, brought up amid

aristocracy and royalty. Mrs. Sheridan aroused the horror and fury of her class by going to Russia in September to make busts of Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Trotsky and other Soviet leaders, establishing good relations with distinguished Soviet colleagues like Andreyev and Konenkov, and coming back to publish her diaries for a whole week in *The Times*: it had contracted for them, paid her £100 a time, but took its revenge in a leading article (November 27, 1920) by attacking her and denouncing Soviet Russia, 'chilled with hunger, pale with fear, rotting into a cold slime.' Her book, *Russian Portraits* (1921) naturally had some naïveté and some errors: but she was transparently honest, she saw through the poverty and inexperience, she understood the great future before the arts: 'despite all the discomfort I love the bedrock of things here,' she wrote—and used to say as much to us



*Rear-Admiral, Ivan D. Papanin and Academician Otto Yu. Schmidt, famous Arctic explorers*

at the guest-house when returning from her workshop in the Kremlin, in the evenings (I was on my first visit to Soviet Russia). Denounced and even socially boycotted then, she has lived into a very different time.

H. G. Wells followed in October. The record of Wells' journey is in a strange book, made up of articles reprinted from the 'Sunday Express'—*Russia in the Shadows* (1921). Utterly misleading in its analysis of the 'irreparable' economic breakdown, badly misinformed about many events great and small, ludicrous in its tranquil Bloomsbury assumption of superiority to the ignorant and incompetent Bolsheviks and in the lecture he read Lenin—yet at the same time the book was vigorous in its defence of the Bolsheviks as 'the only possible backbone now to a renascent Russia,' in its demand

that the western Powers should establish diplomatic and trade relations with them, and in its tributes to the 'astonishingly good' educational work of the Bolsheviks, their determined efforts to save scientists, artists and writers from the worst of the prevailing hunger, and their large-scale measures to preserve art treasures.\*

Moreover, Wells followed up his visit by organising the dispatch of several thousand scientific works of all kinds by the Royal Society and other bodies to Soviet learned institutions, deprived of all such intellectual communion since 1914.

But these two visits remained an isolated event, the fruit of the first relaxation generally felt when intervention was ending, but not followed up for several years—primarily because of the far from happy political relations (putting it mildly) between the two countries. From the beginning of 1921 until the beginning of 1924, I recall only one major cultural event in this sphere—the paper on the Kursk ironfield read in 1921 at the British Association by the famous mathematician and marine architect, Academician A. N. Krylov, who had been deputed to re-establish broken ties with the world of science abroad: and one destined to become no less famous but which attracted little attention at the time—the arrival in Cambridge for work under Professor Rutherford of a promising young Soviet physicist, Peter Kapitza. Even an important and colourful event like the first All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow in August 1923, with its display of folk arts, handicraft and education in agricultural science did not prove, in the prevailing atmosphere, an occasion for carrying Anglo-Soviet cultural relations further. The main channel for authentic information in this sphere for the British people during these years was *Russian Information and Review*—a journal published by the Russian Trade Delegation and edited by Emile Burns—at first (from October 1921) fortnightly, and then (from October 1922) weekly.

A new page was opened in July 1924, with the foundation, at a meeting of over 100 distinguished British workers in the arts and sciences, of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR. The full story of slowly developing Anglo-Soviet cultural relations between that date and 1941 would read too much like a series of annual reports of the S.C.R. for me to attempt: in those years it was mainly through the efforts of the Society that the expansion occurred. But here are a few—only a few—of the outstanding events, to illustrate the kind of development.

In 1925, J. M. Keynes attended the bicentenary celebrations of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, while Sir Richard Gregory, FRS, took the chair at a celebration meeting in London, and a message of greeting was signed by a number of famous British scientists and scholars—the first occasion of its kind. In 1926 Ivan Maisky—then acting Soviet Chargé d'Affaires—joined with other diplomats in raising the flag of his country at the annual Shakespeare ceremony in Stratford-on-Avon on April 23, and addressed the subsequent meeting: a minor event, it might be thought, but for the great uproar which the news of his intention aroused in the press, the attempts of the authorities to persuade him not to go, and the big temporary influx of Birmingham workers to Stratford to protect the Soviet flag. All this was striking evidence of the still very embryonic condition of cultural relations.

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\* Readers may like to be reminded of Kornei Chukovsky's article on Wells' visit in this Journal (Spring, 1960).

In 1927 the 'Contemporary Review' published an article on 'The Culture of Bolshevik Russia,' in which for the first time respectable society heard that it was impossible to 'refuse a tribute to the heroic greatness and daring of its civilising plans' (Prof. C. H. Herford). In 1928 Rutland Boughton paid an extended visit to the Soviet musical world, and came back with the 'first ever' collection of new Soviet vocal music, of which he organised a lecture-recital. In 1930 the famous Soviet film producer, S. M. Eisenstein, and Academician J. A. Orbeli, director of the Oriental Department at the Hermitage, visited Britain and lectured; while an exhibition of Soviet art was opened by the Ambassador of the USSR, George Bernard Shaw opened an exhibition of Soviet photographs, and an important loan collection was supplied from the Soviet Union for an Iranian Exhibition at the Royal Academy. These, too, were the first cases of their kind since 1917.

In 1931 the first large groups of British scientists visited the USSR (on the initiative of the SCR): they were followed in after years by other professional groups. The same year, a delegation of Soviet scientists read papers at the International Congress on the History of Science and Technology in London (the papers were published, later that year, under the title of *Science at the Cross Roads*, in London). In 1934 a delegation of British doctors attended an international conference on rheumatism in Moscow. In 1935—the year when a British Foreign Secretary visited the Soviet capital for the first time for generations—the President of the Academy of Sciences, A. P. Karpinsky, came to Britain, as did the Soviet author Sholokhov: a Soviet delegation attended the International Conference of Physicists in London: and, again for the first time, groups of dancers from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Uzbekistan came for the International Folk Dance Festival. At the first Congress of Peace and Friendship with the USSR, held in London in December, Professor Otto Schmidt, the head of the Great Northern Sea Route and leader of a world-famous expedition on a drifting ice-floe, gave an address on Soviet Polar exploration, while papers were read by Professor P. M. S. Blackett and other British authorities on Soviet science, literature, art, the cinema, health and sport—all these apart from economic and political subjects (the full Congress report was published in 1936, with the title of *Britain and the Soviets*). Other famous Soviet writers—Ilya Ehrenburg and the poets Bezymensky, Selvinsky and Kirsanov paid their first visit to Britain in 1936. For the Pushkin centenary celebrations in 1937, apart from public lectures in a number of Universities by British speakers, Alexei Tolstoy came to Britain (that year the first experimental number of this journal appeared). In 1938 the composer Prokofiev came to conduct for the BBC.

From this somewhat bald list the reader may get some idea of the gradually widening scope of the cultural contact between the two countries in these years. It must be understood that knowledge of Soviet cultural life was also being spread by hundreds of tourists who had begun in the thirties to come from Britain to the USSR, often speaking on their return to their clubs or other organisations and by lectures, film shows and exhibitions arranged by the SCR and other bodies. Nevertheless, viewed as a whole, the process was still a slow one.

There was a striking change when the Soviet Union came into the war in 1941. In spite of the cruel conditions, this third stage was like the breaking of the ice on a vast frozen river. For the first time, the acquainting of the

two countries with each other's cultures met with encouragement and assistance of the British authorities, through a special Soviet Relations Division set up for the purpose in the wartime Ministry of Information, and headed by an experienced and enthusiastic journalist, H. P. Smolka. But the impetus came from the bottom. From September, 1941, when an Anglo-Soviet Week was organised in Cambridge with the support of academic, municipal, religious, parliamentary, business and political representatives, a kind of tidal wave of such weeks rolled over these islands, enfolding large cities and villages alike, displaying to the multitudes hungry for knowledge about their new ally its books, pictures, folk art, photographs and films, with concerts of Russian music, lectures on Soviet literature and science, social services and history. In London there were important symposia on Soviet medicine and scientific research, presentation of Soviet wartime plays like *The Russians*, conferences on the USSR for teachers and schoolchildren under the Board of Education, officially sponsored booklists on the USSR (with emigrant fantasies omitted for the first time since 1917, publication of special editions of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Academician Tarlé's *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia*. *Soviet War News Weekly* was started in this country by the Soviet Embassy, and *British Ally* (in Russian) for Soviet citizens by the Ministry of Information. Both these journals carried an increasing proportion of cultural information as the war went on. In the Soviet Union, too, under far more grim conditions, there were exhibitions of British art, Shakespeare and Darwin commemorations, British film shows and plays: while the Academy of Sciences published the first volume of a massive *History of English Literature* in 1943, and the second in 1945. I for one will not easily forget

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the eerie sensation of stumbling into the blacked-out house during a heavy air-raid and hearing on the radio, left on and tuned in to Moscow by the family when it went to ground, someone reciting in Russian a poem which, long before I could hear the words, I recognised by its rhythm to be Burns: it was ‘A man’s a man for a’ that.’

There were, it must be said, discordant voices too, particularly in the material served out by the War Office to the troops in the latter part of the war: but they were far overborne by what I have described. Wartime feelings of sympathy, of course, were particularly poignant, and—one might think—fleeting in their poignancy. But it was not so. Barriers had been broken which no subsequent cold war could rebuild. For the first time millions of people in this country had come to know that Soviet culture had something to tell them, whatever their own individual interest: and this knowledge has remained. The direct obstruction of the period before 1924, and the all-but-unique position of the SCR in the next fifteen years regards the field of cultural relations, could never be brought back.

Of this there has been ample proof in the fourth period of development of those relations—the twenty-two years since the end of the second world war. They have expanded on a scale which really has turned quantity into quality. It would be quite unreasonable to try even a summary account, year by year since 1945, in this respect, within the framework of the present article. Soviet ballet and renowned Soviet musicians frequently in this country, famous British orchestras and theatre companies performing in the USSR: scientists and technologists of either country investigating at first hand the work of their colleagues, and delivering lectures to them on their own work: scholars constantly turning up in either country under British Council or university, Ministry of Culture or Academy of Sciences auspices for a period of research: students coming to Britain or the USSR after graduating, and language teachers coming for refresher courses in Russian or English: choirs and folk dancers coming from the Soviet Union, the Royal Ballet going to Leningrad and Moscow: Soviet poets reading their verse at British universities, British professors lecturing at Soviet universities and institutes: regular attendance now by Soviet scholars and scientists at the annual meetings of the British Association—these are some, not all, of the new ways along which Anglo-Soviet exchanges have travelled so far, in these twenty years, as to become accepted part of the cultural landscape. Nor should one overlook the role of the cultural agreements between the British and Soviet Governments, concluded every two years since 1959 and gradually widening in their scope: they too are a formal but unmistakable sign of the great change in the climate, as compared with the years from 1917 to 1941. The SCR may claim without exaggeration to have done the pioneering work on this side of the sea during those difficult years, and still to be sharing much of the responsibility. For that very reason it welcomed, in 1954, the formation of a Soviet Relations Committee by the British Council, and later of the Committee’s natural successor, the Great Britain-USSR Association: the activity of which—after some difficulties at the outset—has lately been successfully adding to the volume and variety of exchanges with the Soviet cultural world.

Of course there are still hitches, and there may be setbacks: the past has shown that political relations can hinder those of culture as well as help them. But even the ups and downs of these fifty years should leave us in good heart. The SCR is on the winning side.

# Translating Burns: and a memory of Samuel Marshak

By William Kean Seymour, FRSL

One of the most exciting activities in my long and never dull literary life began in 1952 when an old Dundee-born Scot, who admired my ‘Collected Poems,’ made what seemed to me the astounding suggestion that I should translate the Scottish dialect poems of Robert Burns into English lyrical verse.

My friend, Henry McGrady Bell, who had been for several years the British Consul-General in Finland and was a well-known figure in the timber trade between Russia, Finland, Scandinavia and Great Britain, protested that wherever he went in those northern and other European countries he found translations of the poetry of Robert Burns, but never one in England for the English, the result being that many of his best poems could not be appreciated by English readers (or indeed, as he had proved, by most Scottish readers) without the help of a Glossary.

I rejected the idea at first, but when Bell persisted and I began to think about it seriously, I had to admit that a good case could be made out for English renderings of at least fifty of the Bard’s poems. In the standard ‘Oxford Burns’, for example, the Glossary runs to thirty-eight columns totalling nearly 2,000 dialect word-forms. This had never deterred me, for my Irish mother had inherited a passion for Burns from her father, a fervid democrat who had made Burns his Bible all his life. From her in my childhood I learnt Burns’ songs, and as I grew in the grace of poetry he became one of my chief enthusiasms, and reading his dialect poems presented no difficulty to my enquiring mind.

At last I yielded to my friend’s persuasion to the extent of making a few tentative experiments. I already realised that something more was needed than a Glossary to appreciate fully the meaning and the sound of the poems. For instance, I counted fifty-two dialect words or variations in the first five stanzas of ‘Halloween,’ while Dr. William Grant concedes 152 ‘altogether un-English words’ out of 873 in four of the most famous of Burns’ short poems, ‘A Man’s a Man for a’ that,’ ‘Duncan Gray,’ ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ and ‘The Death of Poor Mailie.’

‘His candle is bright,’ William Cowper said, ‘but shut up in a dark ‘lantern.’ And Goethe wrote, ‘What we have been able to assimilate of his poetry has convinced us of his exceptional talent, and we have regretted that the Scottish language, of whose purest and most natural expression he certainly was master, was our obstacle in this respect.’ Sir William Craigie, a great authority, said of that obstacle that it ‘must always prevent the world at large from fully appreciating some of his finest poems.’

Finally, in the summer of 1952, I began in earnest the task of translating or rendering a selected fifty of the dialect poems. My qualifications—an Anglo-Irish poet—were, that I had always been an enthusiastic admirer of Burns’ poetry, that my long practice in verse has made me familiar with his lyrical methods, and that I interpret poetry primarily as *song*. Not only instinctively, but with all the scholarship I could command, I responded to the challenge. Fortunately I possessed the four great volumes of Dr. Jamieson’s Scottish Dictionary, which enabled me to track words down to

their basic meanings. My blood was up, and I soon realised with Thomas Carlyle that 'Burns makes quite special demands on his translators.'

The book that resulted, *Burns Into English*, was published by Allan Wingate Ltd. in London in 1954 and by The Philosophical Publishing Co. in New York. Far from angering the Scots, as some people had predicted, it made me many friends north of the Border. I lectured in Edinburgh, was entertained in Glasgow and in the Burns country by the 'Scottish Daily Express,' interviewed on the BBC TV programme *Panorama* and invited to various Burns celebrations. But what convinced me of the rightness of my undertaking was a two-column review in the *Times Literary Supplement* which said, 'Just as the Russian versions by Samuel Yakovlevich Marshak have given Scotland's poet a currency among millions behind the Iron Curtain, this transposition should enable many millions to tune in more directly to the utterance of the leading singer of freedom and democracy.' One of Scotland's most distinguished poets and critics, Mr. G. S. Fraser, described in the *New Statesman* my rendering of 'Tam O' Shanter' as 'a rapid, readable and vigorous English poem,' and Ireland's foremost poet Dr. Austin Clarke said on *Radio Eireann*, 'Having struggled through various editions of Burns, frantically turning to the glossary at the back or darting a glance at footnotes, and ending up with a very confused notion of what the poetry was all about, I found that, in reading this book I get a much clearer view of the significance of Burns and what he has meant to his country, his attacks on hypocrisy, dishonesty and lip-service, his championship of the poor and oppressed, his hatred of greed and meanness.'

When M. Malenkov visited England I was told by my publishers that on arrival in London he sent a messenger to their offices to purchase two copies of *Burns Into English*. But one of the happiest results of my endeavour to spread the meaning and the spirit of Burns among the English-speaking world was when I was invited to the 1955 Burns International Festival at Edinburgh to meet Samuel Marshak, first at the Civic Reception in the City Chambers, and then at the Burns Dinner held at the North British Hotel. At the Civic Reception I had a long talk with the Russian veteran, who spoke in English with a fluency obviously envied by his Russian colleagues. At the Dinner the Toast of 'The Immortal Memory' was proposed by the Earl of Home (now Sir Alec Douglas Home). I recall one of his humorous passages, 'A Chinese Civil Servant was once commanded by his master to advise him on the quickest way to achieve Utopia. After reading all the inscriptions in the cemeteries, great and small, his advice was to "kill all the living and resurrect the dead."' In one of the toasts that followed, to 'The Translators of Burns,' Mrs. Jane Burgoyne of Edinburgh said (I quote *The Scotsman* of January 26, 1955), 'We have two translators of Burns with us tonight; Mr. William Kean Seymour, a bold Sassenach, has translated Burns into English and dared to come amongst us. We owe him a debt of gratitude for making the Scots easier for the unprivileged people south of the Border. Mr. Samuel Marshak, from the Soviet Union, has translated the poems into Russian, and 460,000 copies have been sold, and the volumes are in constant demand.' In his reply Marshak said that Burns gave much more to humanity and to society than he received in his lifetime. He was a great poet, simple as a child, and wise as old people seldom were. 'Let Burns unite our hearts more and more in the aim of brotherhood, peace, and love for each other.' The applause that followed his speech was heartening; and indeed the whole

visit of the Russian Delegation—which included Madame Elistratova and Mr. Boris Polevoi, the Russian journalist and novelist—was in the spirit of Robert Burns' fervent plea for the unity of nations and the Brotherhood of Man.

Before I left Edinburgh on the night train I gave Samuel Marshak a copy of *Burns Into English* and he promised to send me a copy of his Russian translations. When talking to this deeply-experienced poet, dramatist, novelist and journalist I felt his native enthusiasm and warm humanity. I sensed also that he was a tired and ailing man, but with unyielding intellectual vigour. Years later I grieved to hear of his death in the fullness of years. I felt that I had lost a friend and comrade in the battle of universal enlightenment.

## SCR The early years

By Beatrice King

One of the regrettable results of the deep-seated hostility of official and non-official reactionary circles to the emerging post-revolution Soviet Russia was the almost total cessation of contact between cultural bodies and individuals in the two countries. The loss was deeply felt by both sides. Fortunately there were both Russians and British in our country who considered this a calamitous situation and decided something must be done about it. It was thus that the idea of setting up an organisation for cultural relations between the two countries was born.

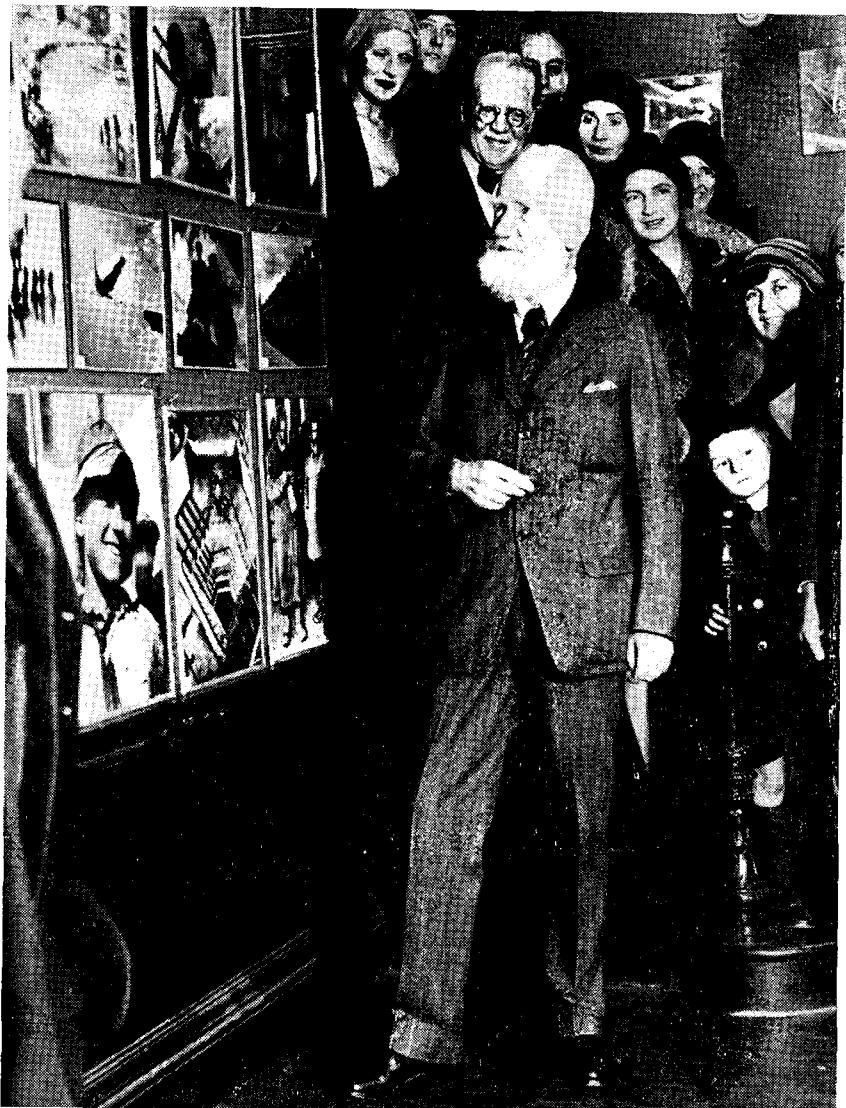
Talks and meetings, begun in 1923, continued for some time and resulted in the formation of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR. In 1924 the Society was inaugurated in very modest premises in Tavistock Square, having one paid worker and Mrs. Catherine Rabinovich as Hon. Secretary. It was the latter's tireless efforts over the preceding year that culminated in this result. She continued serving the Society and the cause of friendship and understanding for many years. It was during her early time as Hon. Secretary that we had so much help from Madame Maisky, whose husband was then Press Attaché. There must be others beside Ivor Montagu and the writer, who remember the gay, enjoyable Russian evenings of song, dance and dramatisations so successfully organised by her.

The opening of the Society was an event charged with possibilities. It showed how great was the hunger for a renewal of contacts, for reliable information about the new régime, despite the ceaseless hostile propaganda by press, politicians and others fearful of the influence of anything that savoured of revolution. In typical British fashion men of wide culture, men of science, and eager youth, ignored this hostile propaganda, sweeping aside national prejudice and ignorant politicians. Readily they came in support, eagerly they came for information.

The President for the first year was L. T. Hobhouse, well-known in all progressive circles and respected for his scholarship. He was followed by Professor Lascelles Abercrombie, leading architect, called by some the father of modern town planning. The growing list of Vice-presidents would have made any organisation proud. J. M. Keynes, Sir Richard Gregory, H. G. Wells, Ashley Dukes and Basil Dean are some that come to mind. Shaw was a great supporter and the writer has a photograph of him with her then six-year-old taken at one of the many functions organised by the S.C.R. Wells came to functions from time to time, as he did to the Garden Party

in the thirties that I organised in Campden Hill—standing at the entrance for a minute or so expected to be greeted officially. He was.

The first Chairman was Margaret Llewellyn Davies, a leading personality in the Labour Party. She was followed by Margery Fry, the great Quaker social worker held in esteem by all. Then came Lady Sprigge, the wife of Sir Squire Sprigge, the editor of the *Lancet*. I knew Lady Sprigge very well and found her delightful to work with on the Committee. She supported



London 1932—G. B. Shaw opening a Soviet Photographic Exhibition

the Soviet Union, while understanding the reasons for the difficulties, the discomforts and the hardships that people of her kind in the Soviet Union were suffering, justifiably, and said: 'I would myself be very unhappy if I had to share a room with another family.' It is sad that she is not alive today to see her faith justified. The activities in those early years were much the same, though on a smaller scale, as today. Requests came in for information on different aspects of Soviet life. Lectures were given by eminent speakers who had visited the Soviet Union. Looking back, one is surprised at the number of people who did go to that country in those first years despite all the discouragement. J. M. Keynes attended the bi-centenary celebrations of the Academy of Science in the summer of 1925. On his return he gave his impressions to a large and important gathering. Basil Dean gave a lantern lecture on the Russian Theatre upon his return from Moscow in 1926. Among the Society's sincerest supporters, Charles Roden Buxton, one of the earliest visitors to rural Soviet Russia, was a frequent speaker, while Vera Hyett, another staunch supporter, was, in 1922, one of the first from Britain to visit Soviet schools, and lectured on her experiences. There were lectures by Russians on historical and literary subjects. Modern Russian Literature was the subject of a literary evening chaired by Hugh Walpole, while Madame Vengerova, a well-known Russian critic of that time, spoke on post-Chekhov Russian literature, illustrated by readings in Russian of Soviet poetry and prose. On another occasion English and Russian scientists spoke at a meeting held to commemorate the bi-centenary of the Russian Academy of Science, when Sir Richard Gregory presided and a cable of greetings signed by eminent men of science in Britain was sent to the Academy. The Centenary of the Decembrist uprising was marked by a review of Russia at that period by Professor Raymond Beazley and others. The Society had a very good translation service run by volunteers.

Quite early in its existence the Executive Committee agreed to set up sections for the following: Education, of which I was Chairman for twenty years or so, Science, Theatre and Literature, Economic and Social Life, and a special Co-operative Department on which one of the earliest members was a Soviet citizen who later became a leading official in Centrosyuz. The Education Section organised special education tours to the USSR during the British Easter vacation, and I was entrusted with leading these. It was on my return from one such tour in 1932 that I was invited to meet some of the leading officials at the then Board of Education and enlighten them about educational life in the Soviet Union. I remember they were very concerned as to who would do the dirty work if all the population were educated fully. On one of these tours we had as a member Barbara Wootton, now Lady Wootton. The film section, started later, became very popular and attracted to its membership leading figures in the film world. Ivor Montagu played an important role in this section.

One of the most valuable activities in these early years as now, was the showing of exhibitions. They consisted mostly in those days of posters, prints and books. The high standard of all these and their cheapness aroused wonder, admiration, and envy among the visitors. It was when examples of primers in about thirty different languages were displayed that our visitors began to realise the colossal problem facing Soviet education. The brilliantly produced primers on agriculture for the vast peasantry just becoming literate brought home to them another of Russia's gigantic problems.

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Among the most successful exhibitions of posters and books was that held in Cambridge in 1926. It had been hoped to give it the accommodation it deserved in the City Council Chambers, but the councillors were adamant in their refusal to pollute their sacred hall, despite the pleas of the Lady Mayoress who was on the Exhibition Committee. Room was found in the Free Church Hall given by the pastor. The Exhibition was opened by Sir Geoffrey Butler, Conservative MP for the University. In a kindly, welcoming speech he congratulated the organisers on the excellent display, and like everybody aware that politics must always be excluded from any SCR activity he said, 'I don't know, maybe there is a political intention. If there is, it is certainly not noticeable. You have brought a vividness and colour to our grey, monotonous city. If in reply we wished to send a similar exhibition to Leningrad, what could we show you in our posters? The latest face powder and the finest tooth powder to preserve the everlasting maidenly complexion?' The great service of this Exhibition is that after many years of being cut off, it once again brings us into contact with the cultural life of a great country through the initiative of the Society for Cultural Relations.' The President of the Conservative Students' Union presided at the opening. He underlined the breadth of outlook of his Party which was not afraid to give its blessing and support even to the Soviet effort so long as it limited itself to the cultural field. It was on this condition, the absence of the faintest hint of politics, that leading dons and College Heads agreed to take part. Consequently the care over selection of posters may well be imagined. Some of the most dynamic posters, calling to the workers, to the peasants, to youth, were excluded, although owing to our



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METHUEN

odd conception of political appeal many exciting posters were accepted. The Exhibition was popular outside the colleges, too, and in those early years visitors were surprised to see Russian translations of Katherine Mansfield and to notice how popular Upton Sinclair and Thomson were. Examples of Russian printed versions of the plays of Shakespeare were shown, produced at a price then equal to 2½d.

Looking back one remarks upon the consistent support from intellectual and cultural circles. The FSU, formed before the SCR did excellent work among the mass of people generally interested in the USSR, and who welcomed the overthrow of the tsarist regime. Their work continues today under the title of the BSFS—The British-Soviet Friendship Society. On the whole the support given was steadfast, even though there were difficult times brought about by political and international crises.

I cannot but conclude with the appeal made by the honorary secretary in an article in 1926, which illustrates the difficulties of those days.

‘The effective development of the Society’s work is dependent on the financial support forthcoming. With larger funds, with a magazine and premises for a reading room, etc., the Society would be able to fulfil still further its aim of facilitating mutual understanding and friendly relations between Britain and the USSR.’

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## The SCR 1937-1952

By Judith Todd

Today, when contacts between Britain and the USSR are so frequent, in many cases so close, it is a strange experience to look back over the years 1937 to 1952, when I was Secretary of the SCR and to realise that they are now a part of history. In 1937, the Society occupied three rooms in what was then 98, Gower Street, and carried on the usual activities of a small voluntary Society, arranging lectures and other functions on a small scale, and creating contacts through a very restricted range of British visitors to the USSR and Soviet visitors to Britain. The summer months were largely taken up with the organisation of travel groups on the specialised basis which was later to become the distinguishing characteristic of the Society’s work—groups of, for example, architects, doctors and lawyers were formed for what was then still the slightly daring purpose of visiting a mysterious country—from the basic price of £23 for three weeks.

The outbreak of war in 1939 presented new difficulties in what had even previously been no easy task: in the condition of frigid state relations between Britain and the USSR, the Society had been for many years almost the sole channel of unofficial contact, and had had to carry on its work with the limited support of a small number of far-seeing members who were willing to risk unofficial disapproval of its unfashionable objects. The declaration of war in September 1939 caused nearly all public activity by voluntary organisations to be suspended because it was thought that the congregation of large numbers of persons provided a target for heavy bombing, which fortunately did not materialise at that time. The Society, however,

gained some temporary fame as one of the first organisations to break this metaphorical blackout, by arranging at the Queen's Hall (shortly, alas, to become an actual victim of bombing) in November 1939 an orchestral concert of Soviet music.

In addition to the normal difficulties of war-time organisation, the SCR had naturally to contend with the special problems of the political climate of the years 1939 to 1941, and the emotions aroused by the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty, the recovery of the Western territories, and the Finnish war. Nevertheless activity was maintained at a high level, and the Annual Report for 1940 records twenty-five major events, including two Queen's Hall concerts and the launching of the *Anglo-Soviet Journal*. The staff at the time consisted of the Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, and an office girl (a species which became extinct after the war), who in addition had to concern themselves with the safeguarding of archives and records



*Moscow Kremlin—November 1959. SCR Delegation with Galina Frolova of the USSR-GB Society: Judith Todd, Campbell Creighton, Prof. J. P. Harding and Dr. S. Osiakowski*

both against a possible German invasion in the summer of 1940, and the Blitz of the winter of 1940-1941. Fortunately nothing was lost, though the most important records spent some time on the pavement in tea chests while the adjoining building was gutted by incendiary bombs, and it was discovered after the war that the President, Chairman, Committee members, Vice-Presidents and Secretary appeared on a Gestapo list for immediate arrest had the invasion taken place.



*Moscow—Soviet children at an Exhibition of British Children's Paintings*

The Anglo-Soviet fighting alliance of 1941, formed after the German invasion of the USSR on 22nd June, had naturally an enormous effect on the scope of the Society's work. Its library and archives were almost the only source in Britain of information about the USSR apart from the files of the intelligence services, and were made immediate use of by individuals, organisations and Government departments. Although the Ministry of

Information in London and the Soviet information services, soon developed an exchange of war photographs, pictorial information about the pre-war development of the USSR, which formed the basis of its successful stand against Nazi aggression, came for several years exclusively from the Society's archives. Exhibitions, mostly pictorial but becoming increasingly elaborate, were a popular form of publicity during the war; the SCR's first effort, based on an exhibition of Soviet photography which appeared to have arrived in 1939, was an enormous success as queues formed to learn something of the powerful new ally whose pre-war achievements had so largely been ignored by the British press and radio. Twelve thousand visitors came to this hastily assembled collection and its success led to the opening of a special exhibition department which organised further exhibitions in London, and travelling collections for the many Anglo-Soviet weeks held outside London in connection with the Aid to Russia funds organised by the Joint Committee for Soviet Aid and the then Mrs. Churchill's Fund.

As well as exhibitions, the Society's war-time activities covered a wide range of different functions; from a symposium on 'Some Contributions to War Surgery from the USSR' to the arrangement of gifts to their Soviet counterparts from schoolchildren, and a series of Shakespeare recordings made by leading actors and actresses as a New Year gift to their Soviet colleagues in 1945.

Musical events continued to be well supported: the 50th anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death was commemorated in 1943 by a provincial tour of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, arranged by the Society, with nine concerts and a total audience of 17,000, while in 1944 we had the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Rimsky-Korsakov, and a presentation to Sir Henry Wood, on his 75th birthday, of scores presented to him by Soviet musicians. Large numbers of lecturers were also provided for the Forces, for schools, and for every kind of the discussion groups which flourished during the period, when the future of society was not left to television commentators.

A feature of the Society's work during the war was the increasingly specialised nature of the information and other services demanded of it, and this led soon afterwards to the formation of specialised sections, through which a large part of its activities were carried on. These Sections worked through leading members in their own field in either country to develop a two-way traffic in ideas and material, through which each was better able to understand the problems of the other, and the solutions which they were attempting to find. As well as exchanging information, exhibitions and visits, the Sections made history by arranging a number of unique events. For example, the first occasion on which a Soviet chess team played a British team was arranged by the Chess Section, in a radio match for which the moves were transmitted through the co-operation of the two national post offices in 1946. This was followed in 1948 by the visit of the first Soviet chess team to come to Britain for an over-the-board match.

The 20th anniversary of the Society's foundation had been celebrated in 1944 amid wartime conditions. In 1949, its 25th anniversary was marked by the visit of an important delegation from the USSR, whose members made many public appearances and private contacts, and were pioneers in the sphere of personal exchanges and friendships which has proved so

important a part of the Society's work up to the present day. It is difficult, at this point in time, to convey the deep impression which they made on the many hundreds of British people whom they met, just as it is difficult to convey the effect of the first British delegation to visit the USSR after the war. Both our countries had been confined by the war to written contact, and we had both felt that, with the successful conclusion of the war as allies-in-arms, a great expansion of our work would be possible. To meet these possibilities the Society had itself expanded by finding a new home at Kensington Square, to house its growing library and to give a fitting home for the activities of the Sections.

The hopes of the post-war period were not immediately fulfilled, for, as it is hardly necessary to remind members, this coincided with the icy blast of the cold war. Several distinguished persons found it no longer polite to be associated with the Society, and, although during the wartime alliance we had often remarked that the public could never again be misled by the misrepresentations of Soviet policy and conditions previously inflicted on them by the organs of mass communications, there was a marked tendency to return to the old atmosphere of prejudice and misinformation. But by now the Society's work was firmly established on a level which enabled it to continue the development of specialised contacts in spite of the vagaries of political fashion. The Science Section, for example, was particularly active during this period, when the Society's holdings of learned journals, and its translations of scientific and medical papers, provided a service in conditions where the present wide exchanges were not available. All the Sections in fact, devoted much attention to the preparation of information for their English members in the form of Section bulletins, based on translation of Soviet material, and for their Soviet colleagues in the form of periodical reports based on material collected in Britain by experts on the subject.

I have tried to give a necessarily telescoped account of the Society's work during the 15 years in which I was Secretary, and for reasons of space have confined myself to recalling events rather than people. The work could of course never have been carried on without people, and without the devoted assistance of members and staff often in periods of great social pressure, and I should not like to close this brief account without mentioning three names of individuals to whom the Society owes a debt of gratitude. Mr. D. N. Pritt, QC, was Chairman throughout my period of office, and his wise counsel and untiring efforts guided the Society through many varied phases. The specialised work of the Society and its development to a higher level of activity and organisation, owes much to the devotion and skill of Mrs. Pauline Yates in the Science Section and Miss Elsie Timbey in the Exhibition Department. To have worked with them, and with the many members, some of whom are still active in the Society, and with many Soviet colleagues, added the warmth of comradeship to the sense of historic involvement in a task whose ultimate aim, the creation of better and deeper understanding between Britain and the USSR, is so closely bound up with the peaceful development of humanity.



*Purcell Tercentenary celebrations in the USSR (1659-1959)*

## Secretarial reminiscences

By Campbell Creighton

I became secretary of the Society for Cultural Relations shortly after the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Looking back now from the jubilee year, I find it difficult to put my eight crowded years with the SCR into any kind of pattern. Years merge into one another, and I have to think hard to establish fixed points and boundaries, to remember when the big Soviet Exhibition was held at Earl's Court, which years the Moscow Art Theatre visited London, and which the Bolshoi ballet. The details, I know, are set out for each year in the annual reports, but as I write, with a background of Turkmenian music celebrating the 50th anniversary, I have no reports to refer to, and can only rely on my recollections.

A host of events and occasions come to mind, some important, some perhaps minor as regards either the activity of the Society itself or the promotion of cultural relations: a Society luncheon for members of the Moscow Art Theatre; the Festival Hall full to overflowing to hear Prof. Alla Masevich talk about the first Soviet sputniks; the Society's garden



*London, 1961—Yuri Gagarin, the first man in Space, at a reception given by the SCR*



*Woolwich, 1962—Soviet teachers of English at the SCR summer school*

party in honour of Yuri Gagarin; Frank Merrick talking on Prokofiev's piano sonatas; meeting Valentina Tereshkova at London Airport; arranging excursions and visits to the Houses of Parliament for a party of 600 Soviet tourists; packing and unpacking the SCR library when the Society moved from Kensington Square; Marius Liepa dancing on the meridian at Greenwich Observatory; artist Goncharov talking non-stop over a coach intercom in admiration of the Shakespeare 400th anniversary exhibition; the baleful eyes of the Hound of the Baskervilles in the Sherlock Holmes 'museum'.

When I was appointed secretary, the Society was just recovering from the sharp internal dissension it suffered after the 20th Congress of the Soviet



*Moscow, September 1962—Miles Malleson getting acquainted with the activities of the USSR-GB Society in Moscow*

Communist Party, the denunciation of the cult of Stalin, and the tragic events of 1956 in Hungary. Activity was fairly restricted; but the climate of cultural relations was favourable and the Society was soon stretched again to the limit of its resources. The interest in Soviet science was quite remarkable after the first Sputniks and the Soviet contribution at the 1955 Atoms for Peace conference in Geneva. I could notice a great difference compared with 1952 when I was science librarian of the Society. The links between scientific bodies that were being promoted then, had been consolidated, and direct relations were developing and extending under an impetus of their own. More and more books and journals were being

translated from the Russian; more and more Soviet scientists were meeting British colleagues in fruitful exchanges. The Society was less and less the initiator of contacts and more and more the trouble-shooter, called on when there was a breakdown of communication.

These developments in scientific exchanges, and the switch of musical and artistic exchanges from the anniversary delegation event they had been in the preceding decade to concert hall promotions, made many of the Society's former activities obsolete, and called for new approaches and other forms. More and more there was a demand from members and organisations for a centre providing not only basic factual information, and publications not otherwise available, but also advice on who to go to, how to arrange visits and itineraries, and giving help to overcome the snags and misunderstandings that inevitably arose, and still arise, from the very different ways of working and conditions in the two countries.

Tourism was developing rapidly, with a steady rise in the number of Soviet tourists coming to Britain; and with it came new demands on a traditional SCR service. The Society had long been known as a place where the British traveller to the Soviet Union could get advice and introductions and help with extra-itinerary visits and contacts. Soviet visitors to Britain also wanted this kind of assistance, and turned to SCR for it. Dozens and dozens of individual visits were arranged: to hospitals and clinics, schools and colleges, law courts, police stations, factories, breweries, research institutes, botanical gardens, laboratories, art schools, fashion shows. The host of members who helped with cars and theatre tickets, by interpreting and guiding, and by arranging parties big and small, made a wonderful human contribution to cultural relations and understanding, and good will. On many visits to the Soviet Union, meeting these tourists again, I have seen how they appreciated what the Society did to make their stay in Britain memorable.

Summer became a hectic period, the high point rather than the doldrums in the life of the SCR. The house and garden at Kensington Square were a magnificent centre for summer activity; but they were an expensive headquarters that actually restricted activity, and the Society was heavily in debt trying to maintain it. It was sad to abandon it, but by selling the house and moving to more central, if less roomy and attractive, premises, the Society greatly improved its financial position, transforming a debt into a positive balance.

The last decade has seen an immense spread of Russian classes and teaching, and an enormous increase in the availability of journals and books in Russian and in translation. SCR's efforts were directed as far as possible to helping teachers and advanced students of Russian; and I think it can be said that its seminars, visits by Soviet specialists in teaching method, summer schools, and regular and frequent film shows were much appreciated. In this field, as in all others, the co-operation of the USSR-Great Britain Society was close and invaluable.

In many ways the formation of this society in Moscow in 1958 was the biggest event of these last ten years for SCR. It was followed soon after by the transformation of the old VOKS (the All-Union Society of Cultural Relations, founded some months after our own SCR) into the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations. The Union inevitably inherited some of the drawbacks of VOKS, but it and its constituent



*London 1964—Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut, at a reception given by the SCR*

societies have put the efforts of Soviet voluntary organisations and individuals for cultural relations on a new basis and developed them to a new level. Around the USSR-Great Britain Society has grown an ever-widening circle of people all over the Soviet Union with an intense, personal interest in Britain, British science, the English language, and our literature, drama, cinema, and music. Many of them made dozens of friends here in England, and SCR has often been the main avenue of contact. SCR itself developed close links with its Soviet counterpart, not only organisationally but through warm personal friendships between their executive committees and active members.

Recently I attended a routine meeting of the executive of the USSR-Great Britain Society in Moscow. It was a pleasure to meet so many people again who have been to Britain with tourist groups or as delegates or lecturers. But it was an even greater pleasure to hear the reports from schools and clubs on their plans for this summer for groups of tourists coming to Moscow and other cities, particularly for school parties. Most impressive of all were the reports by representatives of English faculties, international clubs of schools and factories, and ships' crews applying for membership, on their activity to promote friendship and mutual understanding.

The ten years between the 40th and 50th anniversaries have been years of very solid achievement in Anglo-Soviet cultural relations; but I am sure that when SCR celebrates its own 45th anniversary in 1969 they will be appreciated mainly as preparation for the flourishing that is to come.

# Anglo-Soviet Chess

## Some 1967 reflections by R. G. Wade

With another Hastings Christmas Chess Congress ahead it is fitting to review the whole gamut of Anglo-Soviet Chess relations as the first stage towards considering what could be done in the future.

Leading Soviet players have played in the Hastings premier tourney from Alekhine in 1922, Botvinnik 1934/35, 1961/62 and 1966/67. Bronstein and Tolush made that dramatic appearance in the 1953/54 congress that started the thaw in the cold war and they were followed by Keres and Smyslov in 1954/55, Korchnoi and Taimanov 1955/56, Keres 1957/58, Averbakh 1959/60, Bondarevsky 1960/61, Flohr as a Czech many times in pre-World War II days and as a Soviet Grandmaster 1961/62, Smyslov and Kotov 1962/63, Tal, Hasin and the Georgian women's World Champion Nona Gaprindashvili 1963/64, Keres and Nona together with the junior Yuri Rasuvayev 1964/65, Spassky, Vasyukov and Balashov in 1965/66. We hope some day to see the world champion Tigran Petrosian as well as other famous grandmasters like Stein, Geller, Polugayevsky, Boleslavsky . . . also as contestants. Russian connections with Hastings chess date back to Tchigorin's second place and Schiffer's sixth in the memorable 1895 tournament. After these tournament experiences many of the Soviet players have visited many



1947—Mr. George Tomlinson, Minister of Education, speaking at the opening of the chess match between Britain and the USSR at the Holborn Town Hall, London

chess centres throughout the British Isles to meet the ordinary players and to give simultaneous exhibitions that are treasured memories of those who played in or watched.

Team matches between Great Britain and the USSR have been held three times. In 1946 by radio we lost 18-6 and overboard in London the following year the score was 15-5 against us. The crushing defeat of 18½-1½ in 1954 once more in London seems to have been the end. Though I am sure we would have been welcome we have not been able to contemplate raising sufficient money to send a team to Moscow to play either against a full Soviet side or against sides of different republics. Should we try to pick up this thread once again with our fast-growing junior strength?

Chess books in Russian are readily on sale by the specialist dealers and the bulletins of recent important Soviet events like the Moscow Grandmaster Tournament celebrating the jubilee of the 1917 October Revolution won by Leonid Stein are eagerly sought after, snapped up and perused for new ideas and sparkling games.

A few classic chess books like Botvinnik's 'One Hundred Selected Games' 1927-1946, Kotov's and Yudovitch's 'The Soviet Chess School,' three books covering Paul Keres selected games, Svetin's 'Modern Chess Opening Theory,' 'The Art of the Middle Game by Keres and Kotov, and Averbakh's 'Essential Knowledge about the End Game' have been translated into English. But a lot more needs doing, e.g., Levenfish and Smyslov's work on Rook and Pawn Endings, the three volumes work on the endings under Averbakh's editorship, an up-to-date version of Panov's 'Short Openings,' Estrin and Petrosian's book on the two Knights defence, V. Persitz's 'The Centre,' A. Svetin's 'How to Play the Opening' all spring to mind.

There is a clear need for a comprehensive library in Central London of Russian chess literature to be available for consultation by the vast number of up-and-coming juniors eager for knowledge. Books of the last twenty-thirty years tend to be locked away in a few inaccessible private libraries.

Besides the three Russian Language magazines (*Shakmati* (Riga), *Shakmati v. SSSR* and *Shakmatny Bulletin*) imported into Great Britain I would like to see that lively Moscow fortnightly chess newspaper and the regular bulletins of the Central Chess Club also generally available.

I would like to see more of the top Soviet grandmasters visiting Britain, not so much to play as to talk chess and inspire our young players. And with regards to visits when are we to have a tourist party from the Soviet Union made up of first to fifth category players willing to play matches against ordinary chess clubs and ordinary British players?

We express our deepest sorrow and sympathy to the family and friends of the great Soviet writer, **Ilya Ehrenburg**, who died last month. His unquestioned popularity in England both as a man and writer is in itself a more fitting tribute than anything we can say. Our next number will include a special article on his life and work.

# A visit to Moscow, Tallinn, and Vilnius

by Martin Lawrence

My visit to the Soviet Union as guest of the USSR-Great Britain Society was for a fortnight including the Christmas week of 1966, and the first few days of 1967.

Musical life, and opera in particular, were my main interests, and the first event I attended was a Symphony concert at the Conservatory given by the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra.

This included a first performance of works for orchestra and choir by Sviridov, and Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* tone poem.

At the new Kremlin Palace Theatre I enjoyed a remarkable performance of the ballet, *Don Quixote*, composed by Minkus, with the great ballerina Plissetskaya.

Other visits were to the Bolshoi Theatre where I first saw a very fine performance of the Tsar's Bride by Rimsky-Korsakov, and later Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Khitesh*. A difficult opera to stage with its supernatural effects, this fantastic work was well produced, sung by an excellent cast and conducted by Professor Boris Chaikin.

Tchaikovsky's opera *Iolanthe* at the Nemirovitch-Danchenko Theatre was a memorable experience. The story concerns a Princess, blind from birth, and kept in ignorance of this by the Court, and her cure by a Moorish doctor whose only condition is that she must be told of her affliction. The opera was most imaginatively produced, and beautifully sung. I cannot understand why I have never heard of its performance in England.

I was also present at a private audition performance by a Folk Orchestra one afternoon at the Tchaikovsky Hall. Singers and dancers were included in their programme, and I learned that they were shortly to tour Australia.

On my arrival I had been asked whether I would like to visit Tallinn and Vilnius where some events of Jewish interest would be taking place. I agreed most willingly, and arrangements were made for me to leave by train for Tallinn, departing from Moscow at 8 p.m. and arriving at noon next day.

I was met by representatives of the Estonian Friendship Society and visited the Friendship House. A tour around the city and a visit to a Music Museum occupied the afternoon. The Museum dealt mainly with the history of the Choral Festivals which began nearly 100 years ago, take place every five years, and reveal the enormous enthusiasm among the Estonian people for choral singing. 1969 is the Centenary year when hundreds of thousands of choristers and folk-dancers will take part in the celebrations.

In the evening I was a guest at a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Jewish writer Sholem Aleichem.

This took place in the theatre of a Workers' Palace before an audience of about 500. An eminent Estonian actor spoke about the writer's life and work, and, as I had been seated on the platform, I was asked to convey greetings to those present on behalf of the SCR. I spoke in Yiddish, the language mainly used throughout the evening.

There was a crowd backstage who were waiting to perform in the concert which was to follow the interval. They consisted of a choir of about 30 boys and girls, mostly teenagers, a drama group who were to perform a piece by Sholem Aleichem, and some soloists, vocal and instrumental.

They insisted on my taking some part in the concert, and I had the honour of opening the second half singing a Yiddish song "Of'n Weg Steht A Boim" (By the road, stands a tree) which was known to them.

The performers were all amateur, the choir of average standard, the drama group quite good, as were the soloists, and they were all celebrating their first anniversary.

At 8 a.m. the following morning, I left by train for Vilnius. I found that most of those who took part in the concert the evening before were travelling with me, and most of the day was spent on the train conversing with these newly acquired friends from Tallinn. We conversed in English and Yiddish, and I learned about their various interests, their education and jobs. One man described his job as "er macht kelt." At first this puzzled me as it sounded as if his job was making money, "gelt" in Yiddish; but he explained that he was a refrigerator engineer and 'made cold, not gold.'

We arrived in Vilnius at 7.30 that evening after a day's journey that was both exhilarating and exhausting, and were driven straight to the Workers' Palace. There they had been awaiting our arrival and the performance began as soon as I was seated.

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The first item was performed by a mixed choir of about 60, conducted by a very dynamic young woman. This was followed by a drama group in a play which included music and song. It was about a talented stage-struck girl whose old-fashioned parents opposed the blandishments of an impresario trying to entice her to join his company.

Others to perform were a ballet group, various soloists (mainly singers) and an orchestra, totalling in all about 200. Yiddish was the language used by all, and I learned that they were celebrating their 10th anniversary as a Yiddish Collective. They were amateur, but much of the talent displayed was of a good professional standard and one actor, David Sharfstein, quite outstanding as a singer and dancer as well.

A most interesting ceremony took place at the end of the performance. The whole Company were on the stage to receive presentations and speeches of congratulation from representatives of the Ministry of Culture, the Vilnius Town Council, trade unions and representatives of similar Jewish groups who had come from Kiev, Odessa, Kishinev, Tallinn, Dvinsk, Kaunas, Riga, Vilnius and from Poland.

It was now midnight and I was invited to join all present, including the 1,200 or so audience, at a banquet which had been prepared in a large hall in the same building.

This was a very lively affair. There was a band for dancing, innumerable toasts, to one of which I had to respond, and I found myself inundated with requests for autographs as well as trying to cope with various people who were introduced and wanted to talk.

Among them I met Madame Nechamya Lifshitsaita, who was later to sing. I had heard of her before and regard her as an incomparable interpreter of Yiddish songs. She told me that she was also celebrating her 10th anniversary as a Yiddish concert singer. She had studied at the Vilnius Conservatory, and had included Yiddish songs when giving concerts.

Ten years ago she had entered an all-Union Folk-Song contest in Moscow gaining the first prize with her Yiddish songs. Since then she has given concerts all over the country and made records, one of which she presented to me. She looks forward very much, she told me, to appearing in our country.

Red Army Colonel Wolf Willensky, Hero of the Soviet Union with 14 other decorations, was another interesting character I met and talked with in Yiddish. He told me that Yiddish literature, drama, poetry and music deeply satisfied his Jewish consciousness.

Chain Potashinsky, conductor of opera and ballet at the Vilnius State Opera, was another with whom I had a long conversation in which he described his life and work. He contrasted his life in pre-war Lithuania as a boy prodigy pianist with its hardships and difficulties, and now as a Professor at the Conservatory for 22 years, conductor at the Opera for 17 years, and Member of the State Committee which auditions aspirants for public performance. Many members of the Opera orchestra are Jewish, and, like himself, he told me, spoke Yiddish.

Another musical experience was a choral and instrumental concert given by children of the Cirlonis School for Talented Children. A choir of about 50 sang pieces by Pergolesi, Each, Purcell, Schubert and by Russian and Lithuanian composers. The Ensemble of 14 violins played Bach, Rameau, Lully and several pieces with the Choir.

I visited the school a day or two later, where over 600 children studied music, ballet and art.

Another memorable visit was to Parana, on the outskirts of Vilnius, where 100,000 victims of fascism, 70,000 of them Jews, lie buried. Covered with deep snow, with fir trees dotted around the low hills and mounds, there was an unearthly beauty in this tragic area now preserved as a memorial.

I would like to conclude this account with a few words about the tenor Michael Alexandrovich, Hon. Artist of the RSFSR whom I met on my return to Moscow.

His daughter, Ilona, a language student, who had been my companion at visits to the Opera, etc. was responsible for arranging this, and I met the family at their flat in Moscow.

Alexandrovitch had been a synagogue Cantor in Manchester, coming originally from Riga, whence he returned before the war. During the war he was evacuated to Georgia where he joined a concert group performing for Red Army troops on many fronts.

He gave his first recital in Moscow in 1943, and has since become a concert artist who performs all over the Soviet Union and abroad. His repertoire is of classical arias, songs, lieder, and Russian and Soviet music, but he also includes Yiddish songs in his concerts, and sometimes gives entire recitals of them, many of them with Mme. Lifshitsaita.

I would like to add my thanks to the USSR-Great Britain Society, and especially Nina Federovna Lapshina whose strenuous efforts helped to make my visit such a memorable one.

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## Reflections on the Fourth Writers' Congress

Moscow Diary

by Robert Daglish

Had it not been for Solzhenitsyn's letter, one might have ascribed the almost unruffled calm of the proceedings to a general desire not to upset the celebrative atmosphere of the 50th anniversary of the Revolution or, perhaps, to a growing conviction that good books are made by writing them rather than by polemical battles between literary groups. Here, one might have argued, was a congress to please all who had complained in the past of the rough-handling received by some writers at such gatherings in previous years. Everyone seemed content to discuss in measured tones the problems of prose, of verse, the novel and the theatre, to accept minor amendments to the union rules, and then to hurry off home to study or studio and get down to the more serious business of creation. Some books were criticized but none in an abusive way. Even that firebrand

General Yepishev, the army's ideological mentor, had only praise for the increasing attention writers have been paying to the army and saved his fire for the forces of reaction abroad. The only personal attack was made by Sholokhov, who lashed out as usual at Ilya Ehrenburg, but it turned out that the wise old man of Soviet letters was away presenting a Lenin Prize in Italy and the attack fell rather flat.

Much was said at the congress about the achievements of the past fifty years. And rightly so. Many fine poems, stories and novels have come out of the Soviet Union, but it is sometimes forgotten how much Soviet writers and critics have contributed to education in general, to spreading a new culture which, however dark the horizons, always managed to inspire hope and confidence. In a recent enthusiastic notice on Bondarchuk's film of *War and Peace* a *Times* critic speaks of the film's "shattering breakthrough" and notes almost with surprise that "in its presentation of the Church there is purity and devotion. There is almost a love of the old order, of the old Russia, in the merry figure of Count Rostov. . . ." Without in any way wishing to detract from Bondarchuk's dedicated work, it may fairly be said that Soviet audiences, whose broad view of Tolstoy, as Fedin reminded us at the Congress, was moulded by Lenin's reflections and Gorky's memoirs, would not have been satisfied with less. And yet, in the late twenties, when Soviet culture almost fell into the hands of the Proletarian Culture movement, the fate of the Russian classics hung by a thread.

Another field to which Soviet writers have contributed much is the fostering of the literatures of the non-Russian nationalities in remote parts of the Soviet Union and this good seed they have sown is producing more and more impressive harvests as the years go by. The vigour and variety of the Soviet theatre and cinema surprise visiting critics, but perhaps most impressive of all is the growth in the appreciation of poetry, and of the poets themselves, both in stature and number. The impact of post-war Soviet poetry is still only just beginning to be felt in the West, thanks mainly to the efforts of Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, whose superb readings have stirred thousands in Britain and the United States. But besides these two bright stars there are many others (Slutsky, Bokov, Akhmadulina, Vinokurov) whose work still awaits the attention of an increasing band of translators, lately joined by some of the West's finest poets. It is commonly acknowledged nowadays that the 20th century has been a good century for Russian poetry and some might claim that the Soviet poets of today are merely brilliant individuals, more often swimming against the current than carried along by it, but what cannot be denied is the enormous appeal that poetry has for people of all ages in the USSR. For this some of the credit is due to the Writers' Union as a whole.

Before the congress I had, like nearly everyone else in Moscow, been reading Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margaret*, completed 25 years ago but published only this year\*. Reminiscent of Gogol, it is a fantastic work, brilliantly combining a profound philosophical idea with sharp and sometimes terrifying satire. Part of its fascination lies in the fact that no Soviet writer has ever attempted anything like it, but the

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\* Serialized in the literary monthly *Moskva* (Nos. 11/66 and 1/67).

further one reads the more one finds oneself grappling with a fundamental originality of thought and perception.

The novel develops in three stages. The first is a realistic description of the Crucifixion and particularly of Pontius Pilate's attitude to it. He longs to save Christ, in whose presence he feels relief from a chronic migraine, yet with all his power he is too afraid for his own position to be able to do so, which proves Christ's point that power defeats power. In the next stage the Moscow of the 'twenties is visited by Satan disguised as a specialist on black magic. Ordinary citizens, particularly literary critics and functionaries, labouring under the illusion that evil no longer exists and Satan is just an old-fashioned idea, suddenly find themselves in fantastic situations in which their human, or rather inhuman, weaknesses are exposed. ("Pull off his head!" shouts a disgruntled spectator, and the compere's head is promptly removed.) On the other hand, a poet who insists he has seen the devil incarnate finds himself in a mental asylum. Now the theme that had disappeared with Christ re-emerges in the love between the Master, a lonely writer pursuing truth in his basement room, and Margaret, who sells her soul to Satan to save her lover. But their reward, after a comic revenge on some scurrilous critics, is the eternal peace of death. In the third stage Satan's ugly agents (one of them is a speaking cat) are transformed into dark angels. Satan still reigns supreme, but the dialogue between Pontius Pilate about the impotence of power and the power of love continues and they seem to be getting somewhere.

After this I hastened to read some of Bulgakov's other works, published in a one-volume selection last year†. It includes the novel *Monsieur de Molière*, which is currently running as a play at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre. Again the idea of the ultimate weakness of might against right is stressed, and in the play there is a particularly brilliant portrayal, by Pelevin, of the frail, often frightened but irrepressible Molière. Another work, *A Theatrical Novel*, satirises the Stanislavsky-Nemirovitch-Danchenko set-up at the Art Theatre, where Bulgakov found refuge as an actor (he played the Judge in *Pickwick Papers*) and director, when his writings were no longer being published.

The son of a professor at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, Bulgakov began as a doctor in 1916 and his early short stories are vivid accounts of his rural practising in the first years after the Revolution. He had been educated at the same *gymnasium* as Paustovsky, who has told us in his memoirs of the trail of destruction his young contemporary left wherever there was a pompous reputation to puncture. The *gymnasium*, and perhaps some of the people he remembered from those days, figure in his first major work *The White Guards*, afterwards re-written as a play called the *Days of the Turbins*. Though bitterly attacked by some critics (it anticipated Alexei Tolstoy's *Road to Calvary* in its portrayal of White officers as human beings), it was the only work of Bulgakov's to survive during his lifetime. He died in 1940, still polishing his *Master and Margaret*, which has now seen the light.

The publication and performance of Bulgakov's work (four of his plays are now running to packed houses in Moscow) are not the only sign of a broader-

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† Mikhail Bulgakov. Izbrannaya Proza. Izd. Khudozhevskaya Literatura, Moskva, 1966. With an excellent introduction by V. Ya. Lakshin.

minded approach to the arts. Some of Platonov's stories have been republished, one of which *The Return* (of a soldier to his unfaithful wife) is a gem of gentle understanding. At the Soviet Army Theatre Andrei Popov gives a finely sustained performance in the new production of A. K. Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan the Terrible*, a very different interpretation from the idealised picture of his reign current in Stalin's time. The Taganka Theatre has followed up a successful *Galileo* and Peter Weiss's audience-shattering *Die Ermittlung* with an exciting production based on Mayakovsky's poetry called *Listen!* Victor Rozov has a searching new play *The Traditional Gathering* at the Sovremennik. Abkhazian Fazil Iskander's light satire *The Constellation of the Goat-Ibex* is a very funny and endearing novel.

But now we have Alexander Solzhenitsyn's letter to the Writers' Congress and people who read and love the work of Soviet writers should not be afraid to face the issues it raises. As we know from *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and his other stories, Solzhenitsyn is a writer of considerable stature and we cannot afford to ignore his appeal.

Absolute freedom of the press and of art may well be a myth under any system, but Solzhenitsyn is not asking for that. He is asking that the Writers' Union should pass a resolution calling for the removal of the centralised control exercised by the office known as *Glavlit*, so that publishing houses would be free to exercise their own judgment on what they publish. At present, says Solzhenitsyn, outstanding manuscripts by authors, as yet entirely unknown, are being rejected on non-literary grounds.

His second point is that the Union of Writers itself should offer real and statutory protection (*Glavlit*, he says, is illegal because not provided for in the Constitution) to those of its members who suffer abuse or slander from critics or non-literary organisations, by making its publications available for them to defend themselves. Anyone who has studied the reversals of judgment over the past twenty years, made usually after the death of the author concerned (Solzhenitsyn cites Pilnyak, Platonov, Mandelshtam, Bulgakov, Zoschenko, Pasternak) will agree to the wisdom of this measure.

Finally, and perhaps most urgent of all, is the plea Solzhenitsyn makes for his own work, for the novel *In the First Circle* and his literary archives of 15-20 years confiscated by the security people, for the play the Sovremennik is not allowed to stage, for a film script and stories rejected on non-literary grounds, for the reprinting of his works that have so far been published only in magazines, for the right to hold public readings of his work.

I have tried to show in these notes that the literary scene here already has a lot to offer, but I am more than willing to believe, as Solzhenitsyn has written, that "if the world had access to all the uninhibited fruits of our literature . . . the whole artistic evolution of the world would move along in a different way, acquiring a new stability and a new artistic threshold."

*Postscript.*—Dated May 16, 1967, Solzhenitsyn's letter was not debated at the congress, though 79 of the 200 leading writers to whom it was sent are reported to have signed a letter urging it to do so, and letters to the same effect were sent by Yevtushenko and other union members. When I asked at the Writers' Union on June 19 what further action might be taken, I was told that the Board was looking into the whole question and a decision would be taken and in due course published.

# Future 50th Anniversary Events

Information on the following events has been provided by various bodies and, in a number of cases, dates are provisional or have yet to be fixed.

The calendar is therefore only intended as a guide to the various activities already planned or being planned by a variety of organisations throughout the country including local councils, educational bodies, radio and TV, concert, film and theatrical agencies and organisations directly concerned with promoting further relations between Great Britain and the USSR. For many of these events the Society has provided speakers, display material, etc., and helped in the arrangements. Further information can be obtained from the Society.

The calendar cannot be fully comprehensive, nor does it include many smaller events.

## OCTOBER

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Event</i>
Oct. 6	London (National Film Nov. 15      ) Theatre).	Soviet Film Season.
Oct.	and continuing indefinitely London (Paris Pullman Theatre); Birmingham; Glasgow; Manchester; Nottingham; Norwich.	Soviet Film Season.
24	Edinburgh (Usher Hall). BBC Channel 2.	Anniversary Concert and Celebra- tion with leading Soviet artists. Play—‘Alexander’ (about Lenin’s youth).
31	Surbiton (Assembly Rooms, Surbiton Hill Road).	RACS Anniversary Concert and Celebration.

## NOVEMBER

2-5	Royal Festival Hall.	Concerts—Igor Oistrakh.
3-5	Taplow, Maidenhead.	‘Russia Today’ Weekend School.
6-11	Birmingham University.	Exhibitions, Plays, Films, Concerts.
6	Granada TV.	‘Ten Days that Shook the World’ —First joint British - Soviet documentary.

## **NOVEMBER**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Event</i>
8-15	Lanchester College of Technology.	Exhibitions, Plays, Films, Concerts.
11	London (New Ambassadors Hotel).	Anniversary Evening with Soviet guests and informal concert.
14-24	London and Provinces.	Soviet book illustrator, Ratchev, and architect, Byelousov.
19	Royal Festival Hall.	Concert: Vladimir Krainov (piano).
24	Rosehill.	Concert—Igor Oistrakh.
25	Liverpool.	Anniversary Dinner with the Soviet Ambassador and the Lord Mayor.
26	Royal Festival Hall.	Concert: Vladimir Krainov.
26	Royal Albert Hall.	Concert—David and Igor Oistrakh.
27	Nov. – 13 Dec. Manchester University.	Festival of Russian Art and Drama —Exhibitions, Lectures, Plays, Films, Concerts.
28	Royal Festival Hall.	Concert—David and Igor Oistrakh.
Nov.-Dec.	West Suffolk College.	Exhibitions, Lectures, Plays, etc.

## **DECEMBER**

2-6	Royal Festival Hall. Provinces.	Concerts: Victor Tretyakov (violin).
4-9	Golders Green Hippodrome.	Concerts: Victor Tretyakov (violin).
9	London.	Young Stars of Bolshoi Ballet.
11-16	Wimbledon Theatre.	Dinner and entertainment for 400 Soviet tourists from the Baltika.
21	London and Provinces.	Young Stars of Bolshoi Ballet.
		Soviet film specialists.

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